

Lead tests offered to E.C. residents

BY BOB TITA
Times Staff Writer

EAST CHICAGO - The close proximity of residential neighborhoods to industrial sites is prompting city health officials to offer lead testing for the first time in a dozen years.

Blood tests will take place today at the Martin Luther King Recreation Center, 4902 Melville Ave., from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. On Thursday, tests will be conducted at the 151st Street Recreation Center, 4925 Gladiola Ave., from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Although the free tests will be available to all city residents, the Health Department is particular-

ly interested in testing children and adults in the Calumet and West Calumet neighborhoods.

The West Calumet housing complex is built on the site of a former lead smelting operation that closed decades ago. The neighborhoods also are north of the former USS Lead Refinery plant, 5300 Kennedy Ave.

The company had 2,100 tons of lead baghouse dust in exposed piles when the plant closed in 1985. The piles have been covered and cleanup of the 80-acre site is under way.

Patricia Dixon-Darden, Health Department administrator, said lead testing on 53 Calumet area children in 1985 uncovered a couple with moderately elevated

lead levels. She said the department does not know if the tests results from 12 years ago are indicative of the lead levels in the current population.

"We're trying to see if that's a problem," she said.

High lead levels in humans can cause developmental deficiencies and reduced intelligence. Elevated lead levels also can result in anemia and nervous system disorders.

For children and pregnant women, the threshold for lead poisoning is 10 micrograms or more of lead in a test tube of blood. For adults, 25 micrograms or more of lead is considered dangerous.

Children enrolled in the preschool Head Start program

and Women Infants and Children health program already receive lead tests. Dixon-Darden said a child with an elevated lead level is occasionally discovered.

Lead poisoning can be treated with medication. Health Department officials can often identify and eliminate sources of lead through housing inspections, Dixon-Darden said.

Although interior lead-based paint has been outlawed for decades, East Chicago's aging housing stock continues to place children at risk for lead from old paint dust and chips. Children also can absorb lead from dirt in playgrounds and athletic fields that have accumulated lead from industrial sources and leaded motor fuel.



Free Lead Screening

Public Information Sessions

Tuesday, July 22, 1997

Martin Luther King

Recreation Center

10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

151st Street

Recreation Center

5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Lead Screening

Please feel free to attend any of the sessions.

Wednesday, 7/23/97

Martin Luther King

Recreation Center

10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.



Thursday, 7/24/97

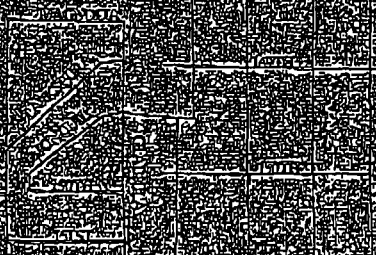
151st Street

Recreation Center

10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

5:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

- Free blood lead test for anyone living in the area shown on the map
- Age limit: 1 year and older



For more information please attend the public information session or call Tony Butler at the East Chicago Health Department at 391-8226.